

2 AIDES PRAISED

Counsel Forced Out —Leonard Garment Takes Over Job

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WASHINGTON, April 30 —

President Nixon accepted today the resignation of two top aides and his Attorney General and asked for and received the resignation of his White House counsel, as a consequence of the Watergate case, one of the most widespread scandals in American Presidential history.

H. R. Haldeman, the austere and secretive White House

*Texts of Nixon announcement
and resignations, Page 30.*

chief of staff, and John D. Ehrlichman, the President's chief adviser on domestic affairs, maintained their innocence in letters submitting their resignations. Both said their ability to carry out their daily duties had been undermined.

The President chose Elliot L. Richardson, the Secretary of Defense, to succeed Richard G. Kleindienst as Attorney General and placed him in charge of the Watergate investigation. Mr. Kleindienst said he had quit because close friends had become Watergate suspects and "impartial enforcement of the law" ruled out such "intimate relationships."

Dean's Departure Asked

Mr. Nixon also announced that he had "requested and accepted" the resignation of John W. Dean 3d, the White House counsel, who had threatened to implicate superiors. Leonard Garment, a special Presidential consultant, was named to replace Mr. Dean temporarily.

No replacements for the two key aides were named.

In a related development, the United States Information Agency announced tonight that Gordon Strachan had resigned as

general counsel "after learning that persons with whom he had worked closely at the White House had submitted their resignations today." The statement said Mr. Strachan "stressed that he had no complicity in the Democratic National Committee break-in or in any alleged attempt to cover it up."

Mr. Haldeman's and Mr. Ehrlichman's departures strip the White House of its central operating mechanism at a time when far-reaching decisions must be made on inflation, Indochina policy and American relations with Europe.

The actions were announced by the Presidential press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, before Mr. Nixon returned from a three-day stay at his mountain-top retreat at Camp David, Md.,

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for a television speech to the nation.

Mr. Ziegler, a protégé of Mr. Haldeman's, looked haggard as he released the news at the morning briefing. Mr. Ziegler is the only man remaining from the Haldeman-Ehrlichman group, which exercised so much power in Mr. Nixon's first term.

Six persons connected with the case have resigned recently
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from the Government, including the four who left today and L. Patrick Gray 3d, acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former Haldeman aide.

Three others quit earlier: John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General; Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to the President, and Dwight L. Chapin, former appointments secretary to the President. All had been implicated, directly or indirectly, in the Watergate bugging last June.

The resignations came after a week of pressure from newspapers, leaders of the bar, Republican politicians, Cabinet members, Senators of both parties and White House officials.

Suspicion at the Door

Although Mr. Nixon emphasized that "neither the submission nor the acceptance" of Mr. Haldeman's and Mr. Ehrlichman's resignations "should be seen by anyone as evidence of any wrongdoing," the political effect of the moves was to carry the cloud of Watergate suspicion to the door of the President's office.

Two key questions remained unanswered as groups of stunned and stricken aides gathered in White House offices. They were the following:

1. Will President Nixon replace Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman with men of similar attitudes, and thereby continue to operate the White House on the old lines, or will he decide to choose new sorts of men in an attempt to operate in a less isolated atmosphere?
2. Will the departure of Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman get the President off the defensive, or will the grand jury indictments, the trials and the Senate hearings to come batter him still more and further impede the work of the Government?

New Men Different

A clue to the future of the White House staff may have been provided, sources close to the President said, by the three

men he selected for sensitive positions in the last four days. The three—Mr. Richardson, Mr. Garment and William D. Ruckelshaus, the acting F.B.I. chief—share several traits: moderate Republicanism, political experience (compared with the political inexperience of Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman), an accessibility to press and public and experience in working in the Nixon Administration.

Most of the same characteristics apply to those being discussed as candidates for the Haldeman and Ehrlichman positions. Among them are Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Ambassador to India; Donald Rumsfeld, Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and Robert H. Finch, who served as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and as a White House counselor.

As one central participant in the hidden drama of last weekend said, "It is a very complicated moment here."

But important decisions were falling to Mr. Richardson, a Boston Brahmin who, if confirmed, will become only the fourth man in American history to have served in three Cabinet posts in the same Administration. Before moving to Defense,

E.P.A. Measure Gains

WASHINGTON, April 30 (AP)—The Senate passed and sent to the House today a bill authorizing \$3.5-million for operation of the Council on Environmental Quality in the next two years.

he was at Health, Education and Welfare.

The President's announcement said that Mr. Richardson would "involve himself immediately in the investigative process surrounding the Watergate matter," that he would be responsible for "coordinating all Federal agencies in uncovering the whole truth," and that he would recommend "appropriate changes in the law to prevent future campaign abuses."

Whether to appoint a special prosecutor to succeed Earl L. Silbert, who has handled the case so far, will also be decided by Mr. Richardson, a White House official said.

Mr. Richardson has not resigned as Secretary of Defense, but William P. Clements Jr., his deputy, will take over much of the burden at the Pentagon, at least temporarily. Mr. Clements, a Texas oil man, is considered a conservative.

In their letters to the President, both Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman said that the case had so absorbed them that they were unable to carry on their work. In the last two weeks, parts of the Government have been paralyzed by the Watergate revelations.

Mr. Ehrlichman complained bitterly about the "repeated rumor, unfounded charges or implications and whatever else the media carries" that had "impaired" his "present usefulness." Insisting that he had done nothing wrong, the conceded nonetheless that "the appearance of honesty and integrity is every bit as important as the fact of one's honesty and integrity."

He said he himself had requested meetings this week with the prosecution and the Senate investigating staff.

Mr. Haldeman, in a somewhat briefer letter, said that he had "always met the high and

exact standards of integrity which you have so clearly and properly demanded."

Mr. Nixon, praising the men as "two of my closest friends and most trusted assistants," said the decision to accept their resignations had been difficult. But authoritative sources reported that Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, after resisting resignation all last week, had been persuaded by the President yesterday at Camp David that they really had no alternative.

"He didn't really ask them to resign," said a Republican source. "The three of them decided it mutually."

No such niceties applied in the case of Mr. Dean, who said, 10 days ago that he refused to be made the "scapegoat" in the

case. In an unusual step, the White House statement said explicitly that he had been asked to resign.

Moreover, Mr. Nixon, who praised the "enormous" contributions of Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, said nothing of Mr. Dean's service. It appeared that in the weeks to come, Mr. Dean would be struggling in the courts and in the Senate hearing against the other former White House officials.

Mr. Haldeman has acknowledged over-all responsibility for what he and other Administration figures considered a legitimate intelligence operations during the campaign. Also, he has been accused of ordering a \$350,000 cash fund kept at the White House during the campaign for unknown uses.

Both Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman have been charged with participation in a cover-up of the Watergate conspiracy. Mr. Ehrlichman was present at a June 28 meeting with Mr. Gray, then director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. When Mr. Dean handed over documents taken from E. Howard Hunt Jr., a convicted conspirator.

Mr. Gray has said he destroyed the documents at the suggestion of Mr. Dean. Mr. Ehrlichman has denied that he knew what the documents were or that he ordered Mr. Gray to destroy them.

Mr. Dean has reportedly implicated both Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman in an alleged White House cover-up.